

Celebrating 75 Years!



As the Greensboro Parks & Recreation Department proudly celebrates its 75th Anniversary, we would like to thank you, our citizens, for your continued support throughout the years. Our earliest history dates back to the 1920s when the first Camp and Playground Association was established to provide a wide variety of recreational opportunities for Greensboro citizens. In 1923, the General Assembly granted cities the power to provide public recreation, and the Greensboro Park and Playground Association was formed. The Association appointed a committee to plan a comprehensive recreation program, which included a circle of parks, a country park, swimming pools and restrooms. The timeline below includes highlights of the past 75 years!



1930s

1933: The Greensboro City Council passes an ordinance, creating the Recreation Commission. Daniel R. Neal is hired as the first full-time recreation director at a salary of \$150, per month, and an allowance of \$25, a month for transportation. The operation of War Memorial Stadium is assigned to the new Recreation Commission.

1934: Country Park, part of a large track of land purchased in 1924 with cemetery bond funds, officially opens to the public on the 4th of July. Work was initiated by Mayor Paul Lindley with assistance from the Civil Works Administration and the Federal Relief Administration.

1935: Adult softball, which is the first athletic program in the Department, is offered.

1937: Windsor Center and pool opens in the new Nocho Park. Funding for the facility comes from the Civil Works Administration. In 1968, the new center is constructed with aid of federal funds from the Neighborhood Facilities Program.

1940s

1940: The City operates two school centers, one community center, 11 playgrounds, 20 softball fields, 27 tennis courts, five wading pools, two areas for swimming, 12 picnic shelters, 24 picnic areas, one picnic house, one camp, four school gymnasiums, a boating lake, a fishing lake and other recreational facilities.

1941: Gillespie Golf Course opens to the public as a nine-hole facility on 80 acres of rolling hill country in southeast Greensboro. The golf course temporarily closes to the public because of the onset of World War II.

1943: Oka T. Hester is hired as the Greensboro Parks & Recreation Commission Director. That year, the first Parks and Recreation youth baseball program is offered.

1946: Park operations are transferred from the City Works Department to the Recreation Commission. The Department is now called the Parks and Recreation Commission.

1949: The first women's basketball leagues begin.

1950s

1951: City Council grants the Parks & Recreation Commission permission for its first bond issue.

1952: The Sixty Plus Club, the first senior citizen club, is formed.

1955: Hester reports to the Recreation Commission that the department has added three lighted softball fields, Lindley Park, Lake Daniel Park, nine holes to Gillespie (the 9-hole course at Nocho Park), and a swimming pool at Lindley Park.

1956: The former White Oak YMCA is donated to the City and opened as Cone Community Center. This building is the home of the Parks & Recreation Administration.

1957: The Natural Science Center opens. It is called the Greensboro Junior Museum and provides a small nature center and environmental programs. The Special Populations Unit is first organized, providing programs for citizens with special needs.

1959: Warnersville Center is built.

1960s

1960s: Land & Water Conservation Fund is established, allowing grants for park land acquisition. Over 30 parcels of land are purchased for neighborhood parks.

1960: Glenwood Center opens.

1961: City Beautiful section is formed.

1962: The Greensboro Youth Council is established. The first Greensboro Youth Council Carnival is held.

1963: Camp Joy opens as a summer day camp for handicapped children. Land is acquired to build Hagan-Stone Park, which opens in 1964. Three years later, Camp Joy moves to its permanent home at Hagan-Stone.

1964: Department is split into two; Parks Department and the Recreation Department. Lewis Center is built.

1965: Land is acquired to build Keeley Park.

1968: Reedy Fork Ranch (now Bryan Park) is purchased. Greensboro Beautiful is incorporated.





1970s

1970: Camp Joy swimming pool is built. The Summer Neighborhood Playground program begins, offering supervised activities, free of charge. The Music program and the Visual and Performing Arts programs are founded.

1971: Greensboro Jaycee Park, the largest athletic complex, developed by the City of Greensboro, is built.

1972: Two departments re-merge after they were split in 1964 and become "Parks & Recreation." Oka T. Hester is named director. Lindley Recreation Center and Peeler Recreation Center are built.

1973: The Country Park zoo is deeded to the Natural Science Center, Inc. The Greensboro Seniors Unit is established to provide programs for seniors, 55 years and better.

1974: Bryan Park opens as a premiere golf and recreational facility after the successful bond election in 1970.

1976: Bicentennial Gardens is given to the City by Greensboro Beautiful in honor of the Nation's 200th birthday. Land for Hester Park is purchased. Craft Recreation Center, Fairview Recreation Center and Safety Town open.

1977: Roger Brown becomes Director of Greensboro Parks & Recreation. Trotter Recreation Center is built. Keeley Park land is turned over to Parks & Recreation to become the City's tree nursery.

1978: The centerpiece of Bryan Park, Bryan Enrichment Center, opens to the public. J. Spencer Love Tennis Center at Jaycee Park and the Lindley Boxing Club, located adjacent to Lindley Center are built.

1979: The City Arts programs move into the Greensboro Cultural Center. The North Carolina Tennis Hall of Fame is built at Jaycee Park. Greensboro Parks & Recreation wins its first National Gold Medal for excellence in parks and recreation administration.

1980s

1981: Greensboro Parks & Recreation receives the Award of Merit for Special Populations from the Sports Foundation.

1982: Fairview Recreation Center is renamed Mable D. Smith Community Center at Fairview.

1985: The Department receives the North Carolina Recreation & Park Society's Arts and Humanities Award for "Tri-Centennial Bach."

1986: The 11-field soccer complex at Bryan Park opens to the public.

1987: City Utilities Department turns over the operation of Lake Townsend, Lake Higgins, and Lake Brandt to Parks & Recreation. The Greensboro Parks & Recreation Department wins the second National Gold Medal for excellence in parks and recreation administration. That year, the Department also received the Silver Conservation Award from the State of North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission.

1988: Tannenbaum Historic Park opens to the public and hosts the first Anniversary Commemoration of the Battle of Guilford Courthouse. Park visitors learn about everyday life in the backcountry of North Carolina before, during and after the Battle of Guilford Courthouse. That year, the Hoskins House Historic District, located at Tannenbaum Historic Park, is officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Greensboro Senior's Unit wins the North Carolina Governor's Award for its A.H.O.Y. Exercise and Fitness program.

1989: Guilford County management contracts with the City for the Greensboro Parks & Recreation Department to take over the operation of Bur-Mil Park. That same year, the Jimmie I. Barber Park, named for the distinguished City Councilman, who served from 1969 to 1981, is officially dedicated in southeast Greensboro. The 109-acre park is a unique blend of nature and superb recreation facilities.

1990s

1990: Greensboro Parks & Recreation takes over the operation of the City Cemeteries Division.

1991: Bryan Park Champions Golf Course opens. The Bog Garden and the Greensboro Arboretum are dedicated.

1992: Bonnie Kuester becomes the fourth Parks & Recreation director. Brown Recreation Center and Caldcleugh Multicultural Arts Center open to the public. Union Cemetery is placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Colonial Heritage Center opens at Tannenbaum Park.

1995: Parks & Recreation takes over the operation of the Greensboro Farmers' Curb Market, one of the oldest public markets in the country.

1996: Leonard Center and the Bryan Park Golf Practice and Learning Facility open. Youth First is created to promote recreation as a model for building positive self-esteem in teenagers in crisis.

1997: The 20-year Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Master Plan is developed, mapping out future programs and facility improvements. In 1997, Joseph M. Bryan Foundation donated 530 acres to the City and Guilford County for future park development in concert with the environment.

1998: Smith Community Center is renamed Smith Senior Center and provides year-round programs for seniors. Barber Park's tennis pavilion is named the George C. Simkins, Jr. Indoor Tennis Pavilion, in honor of Dr. Simkins' lifetime contributions to our community.

1999: On Sunday, June 13, Price Park is dedicated as a 92-acre passive park with hiking trails, picnic areas and plantings. The park is funded by generous donations from Kay Bryan Edwards, the granddaughter of Julian Price, and the Kathleen Price Bryan family. That year, the City Arts' Visual Arts program is taken over by the Art Alliance of Greensboro.

2000s

2000: Recreation Bond Issue in the amount of \$34,200,000 passes with 69% voter approval. The bond is the first of three funding phases for the 20-year Comprehensive Master Plan.

2001: Parks & Recreation is awarded a \$250,000 grant from the North Carolina Parks & Recreation Trust Fund for the construction of the Carolyn S. Allen Community Park & Athletic Complex.

2002: The Department wins the third National Gold Medal for excellence in parks and recreation administration.

2003: On January 5, Frank Sharpe Jr. Wildlife Education Center opens at Bur-Mil Park. In February, the Department takes over the Pyramids Sports Center, which is renamed the Greensboro Sportsplex.

2004: On September 10, the Kathleen Clay Edwards Family Branch Library is officially dedicated at Price Park. In October, the Department dedicates the Carolyn S. Allen Community Park & Athletic Complex in honor of former Mayor Carolyn S. Allen.

2005: The Department's Athletics Section is recognized by the National Alliance of Youth Sports for its ongoing sportsmanship programs, reaching participants and guardians with the coveted international award for *Excellence in Youth Sports*.

2006: In October, Parks & Recreation becomes nationally-accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies, enabling the Department to offer more efficient and effective programs and services.

2007: Greensboro Beautiful, Inc. wins the National Recreation and Park Association's Voluntary Service Award for excellence in conservation and environmental education. In April, the David Caldwell Historic Park Interpretive Center is dedicated.

2008: On April 27, Bur-Mil Park hosts the 20-year Burlington Industries Reunion for former BI employees, their families, friends and guests.